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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NEW DELHI 001113

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [IN](#) [PK](#) [INDO](#) [PAK](#)

SUBJECT: NATWAR SINGH TO RESTART INDO-PAK DIALOGUE IN ISLAMABAD

REF: A. NEW DELHI 909

[1](#)B. NEW DELHI 586

[1](#)C. 04 NEW DELHI 7494

Classified By: DCM Robert O. Blake, Jr. for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: FM Natwar Singh's February 15-17 trip to Islamabad will be an opportunity for the two governments to re-engage at a high level -- were largely negative, and when even the Pakistani cricket team's much-heralded February 25-April 18 tour of India has run into political  
Overcoming Recent Setbacks on LOC, Baglihar

[1](#)2. (C) Natwar Singh's February 15-17 trip to Islamabad -- the first senior bilateral interaction since the December 27-28 Foreign Secretaries

[1](#)3. (C) Now that the GOP has initiated the dispute resolution process to address the Baglihar Dam impasse, Mission contacts agree that New I

[1](#)4. (C) Senior GOI officials seem willing to continue to give Islamabad the benefit of the doubt regarding the recent shelling incidents. (C

[1](#)5. (C) It is reflective of the current Indo-Pak malaise that even the much-awaited India tour of the Pakistani cricket team has become bogged  
Opportunity for the GOI to Refocus on Pakistan

[1](#)6. (C) Natwar's trip comes after the GOI has directed much of its foreign policy focus elsewhere for the past several weeks. Several regions  
Prospect for Manmohan Trip in March

[1](#)7. (C) One agenda item certain to be on the Islamabad agenda will be the GOP's invitation to PM Manmohan Singh to visit Pakistan in March.  
Clearing the Way for Pipeline Discussions

[1](#)8. (C) The Indian Cabinet on February 9 authorized Petroleum Minister Mani Shankar Aiyar to pursue energy deals with Burma, Bangladesh, Iraq  
Future of Composite and Technical Talks

[1](#)9. (C) Natwar's trip should yield a schedule for this Spring's round of bilateral talks, although it would be too soon to expect an announcement

[1](#)10. (C) J/S Singh told us on February 10 that negotiations are continuing, and remarked that "we're close but not quite there." Veteran  
International Centre for Peace Initiatives Director Karan Sawhney suggested that even incremental movement in any bilateral discussions would  
Next Up: Trade Talks

[1](#)11. (C) In the next scheduled major bilateral interaction, New Delhi will host expert-level trade talks on February 22.  
There are a host of bilateral trade issues, including normalizing the trade flows that now transit third-countries, intellectual copyright is  
Comment

[1](#)12. (C) Several recent opportunities have passed for Indian and Pakistani officials to interact since the Foreign Secretaries met last December  
SIPDIS summit, and much of the news in the meantime has been unhelpful to the peace process. If Natwar's trip takes place as scheduled at  
The fact that his trip is being heralded as "the first bilateral visit of an Indian Foreign Minister to Pakistan in 17 years" demonstrates  
However, the run-up to Natwar's trip is demonstrating the new, positive dynamic of Indo-Pak relations, with each senior level encounter creating  
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